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BOB KING, President



JULIE KUSHNER
DIRECTOR
REGION 9A UAW
111 SOUTH ROAD
FARMINGTON, CONNECTICUT 06032-2560
PHONE: (860) 674-0143
FAX: (860) 674-1164
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INTERNATIONAL UNION, UNITED AUTOMOBILE, AEROSPACE & AGRICULTURAL IMPLEMENT WORKERS OF AMERICA-UAW

DENNIS WILLIAMS, Secretary-Treasurer

January 31, 2013

To: Senator Osten, Representative Tercyak and Members of the Labor Committee

From: Julie Kushner, UAW Region 9A Director
Beverley Brakeman, UAW Region 9A

Re: HB 5713 AAC The Inclusion of Labor History in the Public School Curriculum and SB
387 AA Increasing the Minimum Fair Wage

United Auto Workers Region 9A represents over 50,000 members in New England, New York and Puerto Rico. Our members are legal service workers, higher education professionals, table games dealers, light manufacturing workers, technical office and professional workers and auto technicians.

We are testifying in support of both HB5713 and SB 387. We urge your support of these two important proposals.

Minimum Fair Wage

Raising the state's minimum wage is both responsible and responsive to the needs of our state's young and lower wage workers. The current minimum wage of \$8.25 per hour amounts to \$17,160 per year – assuming you work 40 hours per week for all 52 weeks. This is not a living wage but rather a minimum wage that if not raised and indexed for future growth further buries workers in poverty.

As a union, we fight every day at the bargaining table for better wages, benefits and working conditions for our members. We also fight here in state legislature for all workers to have some standards on which they can rely. Raising the state's minimum wage and indexing it to a measure of economic growth is an important step in supporting workers and Connecticut's economy.

Labor History

Our union has a proud history of fighting for workers to have the right of representation and collective bargaining. The right to organize and bargain collectively, as you know, began under President Franklin D. Roosevelt in a law we know as the National Labor Relations Act or the Wagner Act after its author, Senator Robert Wagner from New York. The bill also created the National Labor Relations Board which was charged with supervising union representation elections.

The UAW was founded after this law went into effect to address the poor wages, benefits and working conditions within the auto industry. Starting in 1936, auto workers fought back against

companies unwilling to recognize their work and their value. A series of sit down strikes began to storm the industry. From South Bend, IN, to Detroit, MI to Flint, MI, auto workers led by the UAW sat down and demanded representation and improved working conditions, pay and benefits. And they won.

UAW members gained power collectively and began to win fights in their workplace that some argue created a middle class where there was none. At the height of our growth, the UAW was 1.5 million members strong.

Academic standards and curriculum resources such as textbooks have historically ignored or been deficient in their treatment of workers and the labor movement. Teachers who want to cover this history have no written curriculum standards set by local and state educational institutions to help or encourage them.

HB 5713 would set standards to teach labor history in Connecticut's public schools so that students can learn the role labor unions have played in our nation's history and state's heritage. In fact, largely due to the impact of labor unions in our workforce, today's workers enjoy a broad array of protections including:

- An 8-hour work day & 40-hour work week
- A minimum wage
- Extensive child labor laws
- Safer working conditions
- Unemployment insurance
- Protection against workplace discrimination
- Workers' Compensation
- Collective bargaining to give workers a voice

Students deserve to know that these protections were not just inherited from previous generations, but rather were won by the efforts of ordinary people who made extraordinary sacrifices to create the society we enjoy today.

Thank you.